



Ministry  
of Defence

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Our ref: MC2023/11973

16 November 2023

*Dear Ms McCready, Mr Beck & Ms Beck,*

Thank you for your letter of 5 October 2023, regarding your daughter and sister, Jaysley. I wish to personally convey my most sincere condolences for your devastating loss. It is with great sadness that I am addressing your concerns following publication of the Service Inquiry report, but I hope the information that I have provided demonstrates the constructive changes which have been made since Jaysley's death and will provide your family some reassurance and comfort.

The Ministry of Defence recognises that we have, in the past, failed to provide our Servicewomen with the support they deserve, I was appalled to hear what your daughter went through during her time in the Army. No one should be put in that position, and I am determined to stamp out the behaviour that led to her death and to improve the experiences of women in all of our Services.

We have put in place new policies and support focussed on the health and wellbeing of our women, delivering significant change to our Service Justice and Service Complaints systems.

As you know, there have been a number of reviews which have identified recommendations, with many either already implemented or in train. Regarding the reporting of incidents of unacceptable sexual behaviour, Service Personnel can now report sexual offending through either the Civilian Justice System or the Service Justice System, this is to make sure everyone is given the chance to seek redress as they are comfortable doing. The Defence Serious Crime Command and Unit is now up and running and there is ongoing work to develop a centralised Police Operations Centre to provide reassurance to Service Personnel that any reporting of a serious crime, will be investigated independently from their Chain of Command and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. This is alongside work to raise awareness of sexual offending, reporting mechanisms and implications to ensure that Service Personnel know that they will be believed and supported, and that Defence will act upon any allegation of an offence. In addition, the Defence Victim Witness Care Unit now provides a single point of contact to victims and witnesses through the Service Justice Process, providing support and guidance for victims and witnesses of serious crimes, putting them at the heart of the investigative process, ensuring their voice is heard and their rights are met.

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Since the Wigston Review, Defence has been delivering a broad range of interventions to support its recommendations. I understand your concerns about the concept of Defence Authority and want to reassure you that the Conduct Equity and Justice Directorate, addresses over 90% of those recommendations relating to the Defence Authority, effectively fulfilling the role as envisaged and driving change across Defence. We have introduced a number of initiatives to improve monitoring, including but not limited to the introduction of a the 24-hour bullying and harassment helpline, a sexual harassment leaflet to advise personnel on how to safely intervene and/or report incidents, active bystander training and the creation of the Call it Out Hub, putting advice, awareness, policy and sources of internal and external support in one place. Policy guidance has been improved and updated defining unacceptable behaviours and making clear that sexual harassment is part of that.

Defence recognises that there has been insufficient trust in the Service Complaints system and that there is a desire for greater independence. All Service Complaints of a sexual nature are now fully dealt with outside of the direct Chain of Command and investigations are conducted by independent investigators, also outside of the direct Chain of Command, for example through an Outsourced Investigation Service, which is external to Defence to provide additional independence.

We have worked to transform the Service Complaints System, aiming to provide a system that the Service Complaints Ombudsman to the Armed Forces will deem to be effective, efficient and fair.

I have also asked our Chief of Defence People to review whether centralisation of Service Complaints handling, outside single service organisations, might further improve efficiency and trust.

Recognising the importance of a clear and unambiguous stance on unacceptable behaviours, we introduced three new Zero Tolerance policies to combat sexual offending and unacceptable sexual behaviour that are applicable to all three Services sending an unequivocal message that unacceptable sexual behaviour, offending, relationships between instructors and trainees, and sexual exploitation and abuse will not be tolerated in the Armed Forces and those who are found to have breached these policies can expect to be sanctioned through discharge. The unacceptable sexual behaviour policy is a key change and has been communicated to all personnel in great detail since the middle of last year. It is now 'live', and reports sent directly into Army Personnel Services Group are being received for investigation by independent chains of command in a way that was not previously available.

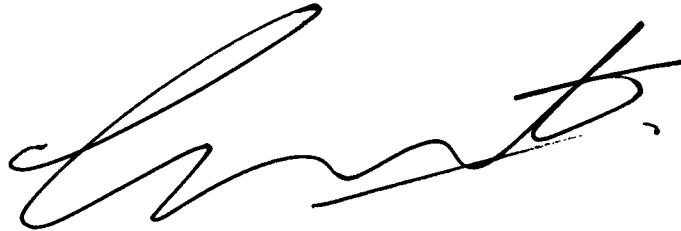
The Army's Speak Out support service offers an additional route to confidential advice, and is available to all service personnel, or to people concerned about service personnel. Anyone wishing to report unacceptable sexual behaviour who does not want to approach their own Chain of Command can call or email Speak Out, and their complaint will be sent, in confidence, to their Formation Headquarters.

I fully acknowledge that there are still areas we can and will improve, including, for example, increasing training provision. I understand the inquest has yet to take place and of course, should the coroner make any recommendations these will be duly considered. But I assure you we will not stop until we have strong evidence of positive cultural change.

In years to come, I hope that you will all be able to take comfort from knowing that this positive and meaningful change was brought about following Jaysley's experiences and those of other Servicewomen and was at the forefront of the minds of those drafting these policies.

I thank you for taking the time to write to me to raise your concerns, and for giving me the opportunity to set out how seriously I am taking this matter.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Grant Shapps', written in a cursive style.

THE RT HON GRANT SHAPPS MP

My thoughts are with the family and thank you for your patience whilst I responded with this letter. I wanted to ensure I was in possession of all the facts first.